

ested in the morals of their constituents to discuss the motion submitted by Mr. Smith, which was: "That this House deplores the rapid spread of demoralising literature in this country, and is of opinion that the law against obscene publications and indecent pictures and prints should be vigorously enforced and, if necessary, strengthened." In the speech with which the member for Flintshire opened the debate he did not hesitate to describe Henry Vizetelly as "the chief culprit in the spread of pernicious literature"; and, according to a "Pall Mall Gazette" report, which he never contradicted, he said of the works of Zola that "nothing more diabolical had ever been written by the pen of man"; they were only fit for swine, and those who read them must turn their minds into cesspools."¹ In this fashion does the Puritan prate when he goes on the warpath. For the rest, Mr. Smith talked *de omni re scibili*— "flinging his accusations broadcast. All kinds of literature, including daily newspapers, came under his ban. He wanted everything—books, magazines, and newspapers,— to be subject to some sort of restraint." He spoke in the "spirit which assumes that what is evilly suggestive to itself must be evilly suggestive to others." But as was added by the journal from which these remarks are

quoted:² "What sort of literature should we have if it were all brought down to such a level as would satisfy the ascetic tastes of the Smiths ? Where would the Bible be ? What would become of Shakespeare?"

¹ That passage is not given in a reprint of the speech, issued by the " National Vigilants," but it is inconceivable that a reporter should have invented it. Besides, virtually the same words as those given above appeared in an account of the speech in "The Birmingham Daily Mail," May 9, 1888.

² "The Scotsman," May 10, 1888.